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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: July 21, 1953

SUBJECT:

PARTICIPANTS: Ambassador Guillermo Toriello of Guatemala
MID - Mr. Leddy

COPIES TO: MID - Mr. Fisher
American Embassy, Guatemala (Informally)
ARA
ARA Board
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I called on Ambassador Toriello at the Guatemalan Embassy, at his invitation, a half hour before his departure for New York and Europe on a seven-week vacation. He had come back to Washington from a trip to Guatemala on July 18 and had hurriedly arranged the European vacation to take advantage of the travel of his brother Enrique and his wife. The two couples will visit France, Spain and Italy and return early in September.

Ambassador Toriello discussed the present situation in Guatemala again and emphasized, as he has so many times before, that President Arbenz is entirely sincere in his determination to carry through his electoral promises for the economic and social benefit of the people, and that communists in the Government are only being used as allies at the present stage of political and social struggle, to be dispensed with at a convenient moment. The Ambassador repeated the oft-told tales of quiet opposition to the communists in the Government, and that the United States could help the opponents of communism by granting normal cooperation and aid instead of leaving them "perched like birds on the side of a mountain". This phase of the Ambassador's apologia has been so often recorded that no rendition is necessary here.

The Ambassador said that he will have an audience with the Pope in Rome, as the Papal Nuncio in Guatemala has arranged this, knowing the Toriellos to be anti-communist and Christian people. He recounted that his brother Enrique was the most loved of all his brothers, as he had

19316

RESTRICTED

714.00/7-2153
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SEP 15 1953
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had given up his legal studies in order to work and support the poverty-stricken family after the earthquake of 1917, and that Enrique and his wife are devout Catholics. The Ambassador repeated again that communism could never succeed in a Catholic country such as Guatemala, with its strong Indian strain of individualism.

In wishing the Ambassador a pleasant journey I made clear mention, as in many previous conversations, of the need of proof of a change in Guatemala and of the danger meanwhile run by toleration and encouragement of communist forces. The continuous praise of the Guatemalan Government in the Daily Worker was brought to his attention, and he said he would like at some time to review these articles.

The Ambassador said he is sure there will be "changes" soon in Guatemala, and that we could help to expedite them by a more cooperative attitude; that the Communists are certainly there, but the time is not yet ripe to dispose of them. I replied that such time depended on the Guatemalan Government and not the United States.

Comment:

1) This is the first time, in many conversations with Ambassador Toriello, that he has admitted the need for changes in the favorable positions enjoyed by Guatemalan Communists. Though this is a significant alteration of his former position, it appears purely personal.

2) Whether his European "vacation" has any purposes other than those stated is so far now known.

ARA:MID:RGLeddy:mem